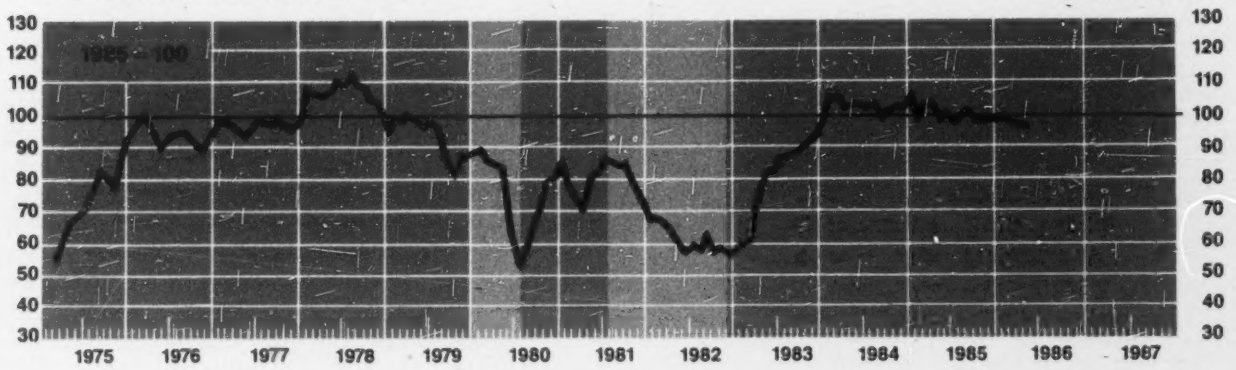
G86 R4105-4A

Consumer Attitudes and Buying Plans

A Monthly Report from The Conference Board
Based on a Survey Conducted by NFO Research, Inc.

Consumer Confidence Index

April, 1986



CONSUMER CONFIDENCE STEADY BUYING PLANS MIXED

The measure of consumer confidence remains steady and strong. The Board's Index registered 96.7 in March, approximately the same reading as a month earlier. With some minor month-to-month fluctuations, confidence has been at about this level for almost two years. Plans to buy were down slightly in the latest survey.

In assessing present conditions consumers indicate some slight concern with the job situation and also with business conditions generally. More people than last time report jobs "hard to get" and there is also a small rise in those who feel business conditions are "bad."

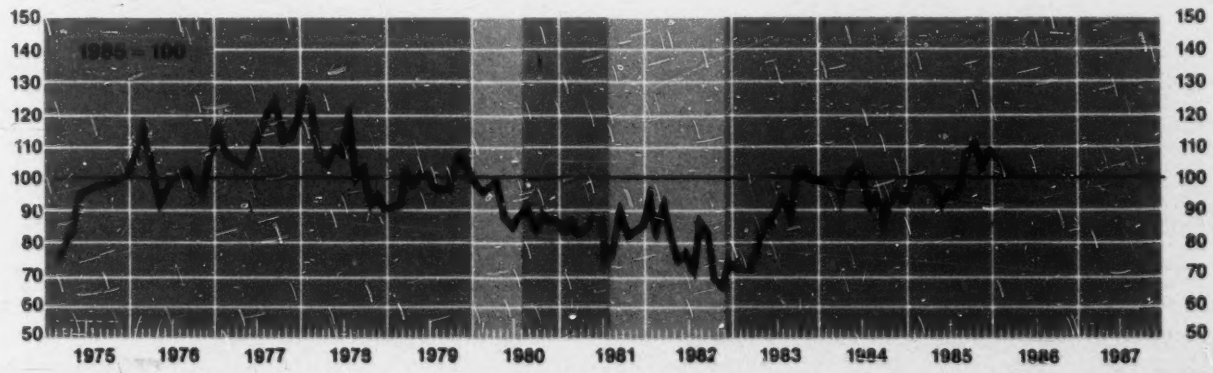
However, in looking ahead to the next six months, more persons than last time believe business will improve and more expect jobs to become more available. But in assessing their own financial circumstances, slightly fewer respondents than last time now expect their incomes to rise.

Plans to buy an automobile within the next six months were expressed by 8.9 percent of all respondents, about the same number picked up in the two preceding surveys. Intentions to purchase a home were reported by 4.0% of those contacted, down slightly from the previous probe. However, the latest figure is still substantially higher than reported this time last year. Plans to secure a major appliance were down for the second consecutive month, but such plans were at an exceptionally high level in January.

On balance, the latest message from consumers continues to be substantially the same as it has been for some time now. Both in their appraisal of the current scene and in their expectations for the immediate future, opinion has fluctuated only moderately. On both counts, consumers' spirits continue to be optimistic. Never before in the almost twenty-year history of this program has the level of confidence remained so high for so long. Most encouraging, the consumer's spirits have remained high despite the lackluster performance of the economy over the past year and a half.

Fabian Linden

Buying Plans Index



All data seasonally adjusted

Consumer Expectations and Intentions

Based on surveys conducted by NFO Research, Inc.
Percentage of all households = 100%

All series seasonally adjusted	1985 *Mar.*	*Apr.*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug.*	*Sept.*	*Oct.*	*Nov.*	*Dec.*	1986 *Jan.*	*Feb. (r)*	*Mar(p)*
					Composite Series: Index Numbers, 1985 = 100								
Consumer Confidence Index	98.0	101.0	96.6	100.0	101.2	99.6	98.9	99.3	98.7	99.8	97.8	96.9	96.7
Present Situation	97.1	104.4	98.5	99.9	101.2	95.2	97.4	100.6	99.7	101.3	100.4	97.8	94.5
Expectations	98.7	98.8	95.4	100.1	101.3	102.5	99.8	98.4	98.1	98.8	96.0	96.3	98.2
Buying Plans Index	98.4	97.4	89.5	96.3	93.1	98.4	107.3	110.3	101.2	108.8	105.6	103.9	100.8
					Appraisal of Present Situation: Percent								
Business Conditions													
Good	28.4	29.1	27.8	28.6	27.9	26.2	26.6	28.2	27.4	28.7	27.3	26.4	26.2
Bad	20.0	18.3	21.0	20.5	20.5	23.4	21.8	21.4	21.3	21.0	21.8	21.8	22.9
Normal	51.6	52.6	51.2	50.9	51.6	50.4	51.6	50.4	51.3	50.3	50.9	51.8	50.9
Employment													
Jobs plentiful	18.4	18.7	19.2	19.2	19.3	18.9	19.6	19.8	19.5	19.7	19.6	18.8	19.5
Jobs not so plentiful	47.8	51.8	48.5	49.0	50.4	49.7	48.2	49.3	49.6	49.6	50.7	50.8	46.8
Jobs hard to get	33.8	29.5	32.3	31.8	30.3	31.4	32.2	30.9	30.9	30.7	29.7	30.4	33.7
					Expectations for Six Months Hence: Percent								
Business Conditions													
Better	20.2	19.5	19.2	20.7	20.0	21.8	20.8	22.0	19.9	19.7	18.1	18.4	20.5
Worse	9.1	8.9	9.4	8.8	8.1	8.7	8.9	10.8	9.1	8.5	8.7	8.4	9.1
Same	70.7	71.6	71.4	70.5	71.9	69.5	70.3	67.2	71.0	71.8	73.2	73.2	70.4
Employment													
More jobs	14.8	15.4	14.4	15.7	15.4	16.8	16.1	16.7	15.2	15.5	13.6	14.2	15.7
Fewer jobs	15.9	16.0	17.0	16.0	14.9	15.4	16.7	16.7	17.3	16.1	16.8	16.8	17.5
Same	69.3	68.6	68.6	68.3	69.7	67.8	67.2	66.6	67.5	68.4	69.6	69.0	66.8
Income													
Increase	27.0	25.3	26.2	27.4	26.1	27.3	28.0	27.4	29.8	26.7	28.2	26.6	25.8
Decrease	7.7	7.4	8.3	7.8	7.5	7.8	8.0	8.3	7.9	8.4	7.7	8.2	7.3
Same	65.3	67.3	65.5	64.8	66.4	64.9	64.0	64.3	62.3	64.9	64.1	65.2	66.9
					Plans to Buy Within Six Months: Percent								
Automobile													
Yes	8.8	8.6	8.1	8.2	8.1	8.5	10.6	8.9	9.1	10.2	9.0	8.8	8.9
New	4.8	4.9	4.5	4.7	5.1	5.0	6.0	5.1	5.3	5.4	5.1	4.4	4.8
Used	3.1	3.0	2.7	3.1	2.6	3.1	3.1	2.9	2.8	3.3	2.9	2.8	2.9
Uncertain	0.9	0.7	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.5	0.9	1.0	1.5	1.0	1.6	1.2
Home													
Yes	3.4	3.6	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.8	3.9	3.7	4.2	4.0
New	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.8	0.9	1.3	1.0	1.2
Lived in	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.1
Uncertain	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.8	1.1	0.8	0.8	1.1	0.9	0.4	1.2	0.7
Major appliances													
Total plans	27.9	27.1	24.5	27.9	27.8	27.8	28.4	35.9	28.5	29.8	34.5	30.2	27.9
Refrigerator	3.9	3.8	3.4	4.2	4.4	3.9	3.7	5.1	3.9	4.4	5.8	4.3	4.0
Washing machine	3.8	4.5	3.0	3.5	3.8	3.8	3.9	6.2	3.7	3.8	4.9	4.3	4.0
Black and white TV	0.8	0.4	0.5	0.5	1.0	0.7	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.4
Color TV	7.4	7.3	7.2	7.8	7.0	7.5	7.8	10.0	8.1	8.5	9.3	8.5	8.0
Vacuum Cleaner	4.6	4.2	3.9	4.5	4.1	4.5	5.0	5.1	5.1	4.9	5.7	4.4	4.7
Range	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.7	3.0	3.0	2.7	3.2	2.7	3.0	3.0	2.5	2.1
Clothes dryer	3.2	3.2	2.5	3.1	3.1	2.8	3.4	4.1	2.9	3.1	3.8	3.4	3.5
Air conditioner	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.5	2.1	1.2
Carpet	6.7	7.4	6.2	7.4	7.6	7.1	7.0	8.7	6.7	6.6	7.3	6.9	6.8
					Vacation Intended Within Six Months: Percent								
Vacation Intended		48.9		50.3		48.7		49.2		44.7		47.0	
Destination													
Home state		9.3		9.7		9.4		8.8		8.0		9.2	
Other state		33.8		35.2		34.0		35.4		32.2		31.9	
Foreign country		8.2		6.9		7.1		6.0		5.9		7.4	
Means of travel													
Automobile		30.1		32.1		29.9		29.8		26.1		28.2	
Airplane		20.0		19.4		19.1		18.3		18.3		18.1	
Other		5.7		4.3		4.1		3.8		4.5		5.0	

(p)—preliminary (r)—revised

Please Note: In the interest of speeding the data contained in this publication to you, these series are now available on-line through The Conference Board Data Base. For more information, contact Linette Stein Waters at (212) 759-0900.